

Lab sets new record for waste shipments

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Each shipment moves LANL closer to cleanup

LOS ALAMOS, New Mexico, August 20, 2010—Los Alamos National Laboratory set a new LANL record on Friday by completing its 132nd transuranic (TRU) waste shipment of fiscal year 2010 to the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) near Carlsbad, New Mexico. The shipment eclipsed last year's record total of 131 shipments, with five weeks still remaining in fiscal year 2010.

"Removing this waste from Los Alamos is crucial to our plans for overall cleanup," said George Rael, environmental projects manager of the National Nuclear Security Administration's Los Alamos Site Office. "We're getting waste off 'the Hill' and putting it in a safe, permanent home."

TRU waste contains items such as gloves, clothing, and lab equipment contaminated with elements heavier than uranium and above certain quantities. Liquid waste is

not allowed. It's packaged in drums or boxes, which are then placed in a large, steel shipping container called a TRUPACT-II. Each truck carries up to three TRUPACT-IIs containing 14 drums each.

Shipping to WIPP is a collaborative effort. LANL crews carefully inspect and repackage Cold War-era waste drums to comply with WIPP's acceptance requirements. WIPP crews then certify the TRU drums for disposal in accordance with a DOE program approved by federal and New Mexico regulators. Crews from WIPP load the TRUPACT-IIs, perform final inspections, receive a New Mexico inspection, and execute the shipment.

WIPP and state officials track each shipment until its safe arrival at the repository.

Over the last two years, only Idaho National Laboratory has sent more waste to WIPP. LANL has safely sent 669 shipments since 1999. This year, LANL expects to send 158 shipments.

"We're happy to be supporting not only LANL's cleanup efforts, but also the Department of Energy's National Transuranic Waste Program," said Kathy Johns-Hughes, director of the Lab's Waste Disposition Program. "Accelerating the pace of shipments, and doing it safely, is our top priority."

LANL has an estimated 10,000 containers in aboveground storage, awaiting processing and eventual shipment to WIPP. The containers must be removed from the Lab's Technical Area 54 before cleanup can be completed. Under an agreement with the state of New Mexico, that cleanup must be complete by the end of 2015.

Los Alamos National Laboratory

www.lanl.gov

(505) 667-7000

Los Alamos, NM

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